

Content Analysis: YouTube Responses to President Obama's "Amazing Grace" Rendition

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Abstract

This content analysis uses framing to examine the themes and tone of comments on a C-SPAN video posted on YouTube of President Barack Obama singing the opening refrain of "Amazing Grace." Obama sang an excerpt of the Christian hymn while delivering a eulogy for a Black pastor and state senator who was among nine people gunned down in his church in 2015. This study incorporates computational techniques, specifically topic modeling. The themes that emerged include God bless America and Obama, Obama is a hypocrite, Obama is a racist, and Obama can sing. Findings show that the most prevalent themes referenced the President's singing ability and the hypocrisy of a "Muslim" and "supporter of gay marriage" speaking at a funeral for a Christian pastor. Findings also show that a subset of comments was primarily positive yet equally negative and neutral. This study suggests that user-generated content can serve as a catalyst for discussions in a "postracial" society.

Keywords: President Barack Obama, Amazing Grace, YouTube, framing, content analysis, postracial society

INTRODUCTION

President Barack Obama delivered a eulogy, a political speech, and a meditation on race in America in Charleston, South Carolina, at the June 26, 2015, funeral of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney. The state senator was killed by a White gunman visiting Bible study at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where Pinckney served as the senior pastor. "As a nation, out of this terrible tragedy, God has visited grace upon us for he has allowed us to see where we've been blind," Obama said. "He's given us the chance, where we've been lost, to find our best selves" ("Obama sings Amazing Grace in Clementa Pinckney eulogy" - CNNPolitics.com, 2015). At the end of the eulogy, the mostly Black crowd was on its feet, clapping and cheering Obama as he named each of the nine victims of the church shooting and declared each "had grace." Many individuals remarked on the eloquence Obama espoused in the eulogy; however, the President was most remembered for a moment in the end when he sang the opening refrain of the Christian hymn, "Amazing Grace."

About five months later, Obama's rendition of "Amazing Grace" still was causing a stir worldwide. In England, Chris Martin, lead singer of the British rock band Coldplay, said the group added a clip of Obama singing the gospel anthem on its new album "Because of the historical significance of what he did and also that that song being about, 'I'm lost but now I'm

found” (Wootton, 2015). Obama is featured on the song “Kaleidoscope” on Coldplay’s “A Head Full of Dreams” album released December 4, 2015 (Coscarelli, 2015).

In 2016, Obama’s presidency will come to an end, yet several academic interests still surround his tenure and the days following it. This study uses framing and content analysis to explore themes and tone in YouTube comments posted in response to a C-SPAN video in which Obama sang a part of “Amazing Grace.” C-SPAN’s website does not allow users to comment on its videos; therefore, researchers chose to study YouTube comments for two reasons. First, YouTube continues to grow in popularity among Internet users, and more scholars are analyzing videos and comments posted on the video-sharing site. Founded in 2005, YouTube has more than 1 billion users, which make up approximately a third of the people on the Internet (YouTube Statistics, 2016). Second, a Facebook, YouTube is the next largest social networking site, with 63% of Internet users, and is used more often than Twitter, which has 21% of users (Anderson, 2015). The Pew Research Center reports that that about 51% of adults use YouTube, compared with 64% on Facebook and 16% on Twitter. Additionally, Pew described “social media as a pathway to news” noting that 10% of the, get their news YouTube, compared to 30% on Facebook and 8% on Twitter (Anderson & Caumont, 2014). Additionally, YouTube 18- to 29-year-olds (82%) widely use YouTube, and Blacks (76%) and Hispanics (74%) use it more than Whites (57%) (Anderson, 2015).

YouTube not only allows users to upload their videos and post their opinions in comments, but it also gives them access to news and other information. “YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small” (About YouTube, 2016). Many people—particularly millennials—catch up on the news through their favorite blogs, Twitter, and YouTube videos, or on their cell phones. Poindexter (2012) found that millennials are more likely than their Baby Boomer parents to access news with smartphones and apps and share news through social media, texting, and email.

For this study, YouTube provided a platform to retrieve and analyze fragments of public opinion to develop overarching themes regarding President Obama’s public appearance. The C-SPAN video reached an audience who otherwise might not have paid attention to or commented about President Obama singing “Amazing Grace.” “The Internet has accelerated the circulation of ideas, facilitated vast social networks, and alter economics of media by enabling the distribution of free content” (George-Palilonis, 2013, p. 7).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing

This study uses framing theory as a lens to analyze YouTube comments. Framing refers to “the process through which individuals or groups make sense of their external environment” (Boettcher, 2004, p. 332). Framing theory presumes the prevalent media will focus attention on newsworthy events and place them within a sphere of meaning. Several scholars have applied framing theory to social networking sites, particularly Facebook and Twitter (Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson & Shin, 2011; Harlow, 2012). In his landmark study, Entman (1993) defined the term by noting that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Entman (1993) also asserted that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

Themes and tone in YouTube videos. In this study, C-SPAN published on YouTube the video of President Obama singing. In the early years of the Internet, establishing a Web presence required skill and resources that prevented many people from publishing content; however, interactive user-generated content such as YouTube has created a new platform (Freeman & Chapman, 2007). Studies of YouTube comments are important as they employ framing devices that users can share easily. Theoretically, YouTube comments, like any other communication venue, might allow individuals and groups to use frames to emphasize particular considerations over others. Such frames have the ability to spread quickly, and different frames are likely to compete with one another.

Adding to the framing literature, Edgerly, Vraga, Dalrymple, Macafee, and Fung (2013) analyzed 45,759 YouTube comments on 207 videos in a study about the Proposition 8 campaign in California. Their study specifically examined the relationship of the comments to the tone and themes of the videos; one of the topics was religion. The authors hypothesized that videos that included religion as a topic would be positively related to comments about religion (Edgerly et al., 2013, p. 280). Researchers found that videos that mentioned the topic of religion had a significantly higher portion of comments about religion. The study suggested that YouTube viewers who comment have the opportunity to influence terms of and set the agenda for future discussions, as well as shape public opinion (Edgerly et al., 2013, p. 289). In a similar study, Tian (2010) used framing theory to analyze YouTube videos and related audience comments regarding organ donation. The author analyzed 964 comments on 355 videos to determine whether the meta-frames were positive, negative, or neutral (Tian, 2010). The author found that a majority of the audience frames were positive, which was consistent with the frame-setting process, where media frames influenced audience frames (Tian, 2010, p. 244).

Representations of race in online news and YouTube videos. Representations of race are particularly important as scholars have concluded traditional stereotypes often transfer to online platforms. Josey, Hurley, Hefner, and Dixon (2008) looked at representations of race in their content analysis of the portrayal of racial stereotypes in a new media environment. The content analysis included three months of online news found on the 11 top news websites based on web traffic. The authors discovered online media contained similar content as traditional television news, including a strong association of people of color with problematic behaviors and issues. Except for Asians, all minority groups were underrepresented when compared to U.S. Census data for 2006. For instance, Blacks were underrepresented as a racial group in online news websites and were also frequently portrayed in a ridiculing and stereotypic manner. Likewise, Hispanics were underrepresented and were more than four times more likely to be associated with illegal immigration than the authors expected. U.S. online news providers were overrepresented relative to U.S. minority groups, Arab non-Americans. They were also disproportionately mentioned in reference to acts of terror. Conversely, Asians were portrayed with a greater frequency by the news media than one would observe in the actual U.S. population. There were also few stereotypes associated with the group. They were often depicted as the "model minority," respectful, intelligent, and industrious. Similarly, Whites were portrayed in a much more positive manner and were the only racial group to have fewer stereotypes associated with the group than anticipated.

Similarly, Kopacz and Lawton (2013) explored race in their study that showed how users responded to depictions of Native Americans in traditional as well as contemporary mainstream portrayals. The comments were coded based on whether the overall tone was positive, negative, neutral, or mixed. The authors, who coded a total of 1,406 comments on 221

videos, explored whether the tone of the comment changed based on the tone of the video, or the depiction of Native Americans in the video. The authors concluded that negative portrayals resulted in negative comments, whereas positive portrayals may result in positive comments (Kopacz & Lawton, 2013). However, their examination of YouTube videos revealed a number of promising patterns, suggesting that messages broadcast by viral video sites may deviate from the firm stereotypical depictions and provide multiple, positive portrayals. This study's findings suggest that UGC sites provide updated, diverse, respectful depictions of Native Americans. As such, audiences can use UGC strategically to promote native cultures and influence vitality perceptions in society. Given these findings, it appears that Native American tribes can use UGC to alter vitality perceptions and empower their members to maintain group integrity, strengthening their place in the social hierarchy.

In another study on YouTube and race, Oliha (2011) studied comments posted on a video of a sermon by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, President Obama's former mentor and pastor. Wright gained widespread media attention during the 2008 presidential election because of controversial remarks he made regarding foreign policy and race issues. After analyzing 106 posts from among nearly 6,000 YouTube comments, Oliha (2011) concluded that America could not escape the construct of race, and this construct would be interjected into the conversation during the most inopportune times.

Framing President Obama. Scholars have researched President Obama's terms in office from several perspectives, including the emergence or lack of a "postracial" society and the intersections of race, power, culture, and communication. Dyson (2009) posited that Obama's election and refusal to be defined exclusively by race might help develop a new era in race relations in the United States and add new opportunities for cross-racial dialogue. Likewise, Chisholm (2008) suggested that Obama's election represents a range of possibilities for interracial communication and that "genuine and substantial communication between persons of different races is happening for the first time" (p. 15).

Offering a global perspective, Parameswaran (2009) examined the implications of Obama's successful presidential candidacy for both expanding and reducing the meanings of Blackness in relation to transnational America. He concluded that the implications of Obama's success for the "analytic and lived categories of race, gender, class, and nation have very clearly rippled well beyond the national stage" (p. 196).

Other scholars have gauged the impact that the "Obama effect" might have on media representations in advertisements. For instance, a study by Yoo and Kim (2010) examined if the "Obama effect" is transferable to portrayals of minority models in consumer magazine ads. The content analysis of the advertisements from eight magazines indicated that Black models appeared more frequently during Obama's Democratic Party primary races and presidency. Woodard and Rodriguez (2010) concluded that the election of a Black President symbolizes to many students that the United States is now a fair and color-blind society where there is no need to discuss issues of diversity and racial relations. "Therefore, they do not see the need to be bothered with class assignments like creating a diverse source bank or ethical case studies on how to enter multicultural communities and report on them" (Woodard & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 15-16). The authors add:

Our nation wants to be one that is finished with the problem of racism, but unfortunately we are not yet at this point in our history. On the contrary, a cursory view of recent events offers

ample evidence of the pressing need to address race and diversity issues in our teaching, research and advocacy.

Race has been the most salient issue discussed in mass media messages about the Obamas. The biggest challenge that Obama faced initially was the question of whether America was ready for a Black President (Moody & Dates, 2014). While skeptical at first, newscasters and political analysts later framed Obama as the "first" viable African-American candidate—or the one candidate who crossed racial and social lines to appeal to undecided voters and even Republicans. Though Obama openly embraced the fact that he is a Black man, he did so in a way that did not overly alarm non-Blacks. Although President Obama was the fifth African-American senator in U.S. history, media coverage often focused on negative perceptions including doubts about his reliability because of his age/experience, rumors about his citizenship, religion, and liberal views. His so-called "star power" both helped and hindered him as he fought to make voters take him seriously during the presidential primaries (Moody & Dates, 2014).

News outlets incorporated the Rev. Jeremiah Wright debacle and the rumor that he is Muslim into their coverage using various framing tactics. These portrayals presented challenges that the former senator found hard to overcome. Later in the political race, frames shifted, and networks spotlighted Obama's charisma, intellect, and political experience from serving in the Senate. Worth noting for this study is although Obama often basked in positive portrayals in the mass media while he was running for president, those portrayals were mixed among citizens. During President Obama's earlier years in office, citizen-produced messages often included traditional racist ideologies (Moody, 2012). For instance, Facebook groups resurrected historical antebellum stereotypes that reflected and reinforced racist stereotypes identified in previous studies (e.g., hooks, 1992; Collins, 2004; Ono, 2009). Findings demonstrate that historical representations of African-Americans remain strong and have an impact on their modern portrayals.

Research Questions

The literature on the framing of President Obama and the evolution of citizen use of social media platforms is abundant. However, absent from the literature are studies on President Obama that assess citizen framing of his terms in office using YouTube comments. When looking at framing, it is worth looking beyond traditional media as audiences are increasingly relying on social media for their news. Based on this literature review and the perceived gaps, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What themes emerged in the YouTube comments regarding President Obama singing "Amazing Grace"?

RQ2: What was the primary tone of the YouTube comments?

METHODS

This content analysis uses framing to examine a C-SPAN video posted on YouTube of President Obama singing of "Amazing Grace." A quantitative and qualitative approach was used because to move beyond the analysts' somewhat subjective observations. Quantitative research can identify what works, but has limited explanatory power. On the other hand, qualitative research provides "rich information" that is subjective and cannot be generalized (Condelli & Heide, 2004). By combining the two methods, research becomes more "rigorous" as the quantitative method tells "what works" while the qualitative method gives insight into "how it works" (Condelli & Heide, 2004, p. 2). This study provides the framework for understanding

the way in which citizens framed Obama’s singing of “Amazing Grace” and reveals the underlying social messages embedded within the news.

In this study, researchers collected 1,656 YouTube comments that appeared between June 26, 2015, the day Obama sang excerpts of the song, and December 4, 2015, the day ColdPlay release its album featuring that portion of “Amazing Grace.” The unit of analysis was the YouTube comment. A comment is a paragraph of text that begins with a user’s screen name and ends above another user’s screen name (see, e.g., Vergeer & Hermans, 2008). User comments about YouTube videos appear in the “Comments” section present under each video’s box.

Computational techniques, specifically topic modeling from natural language processing using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) method (Biel, Ng, & Jordan, 2003), were applied to the comments. The method assumes each comment belongs to a set of (hidden/latent) themes, and for each topic, some words are more likely to be used than others to express it. LDA attempts to discover the themes by finding the words associated with it. At the end of the method, LDA outputs a set of topics, which are described by the words that are associated with it. LDA also categorizes each comment with the topic(s) that are most associated with the comment. By examining the output, scholars can get a better picture of the various topics associated with the comments. LDA does not require researchers to predefine the set of topics; it automatically discovers them by associating words to each one. Table 1 provides a summary of the computational method. Figure 1 gives an overview of the method in detail.

Table 1: Summary of Computational Method: Latent Dirichlet Allocation

- Assume a set of underlying (latent) themes for the YouTube comments (8 for this study)
- Each theme is associated with a set of words from the YouTube comments
- (weights/probability associate with each word to denote strength of association)
- Theme is represented by words that have the strongest association
- Each comment can be assigned to theme(s) based on the weights of the words in it
- LDA method assigns words to themes and themes to YouTube comments

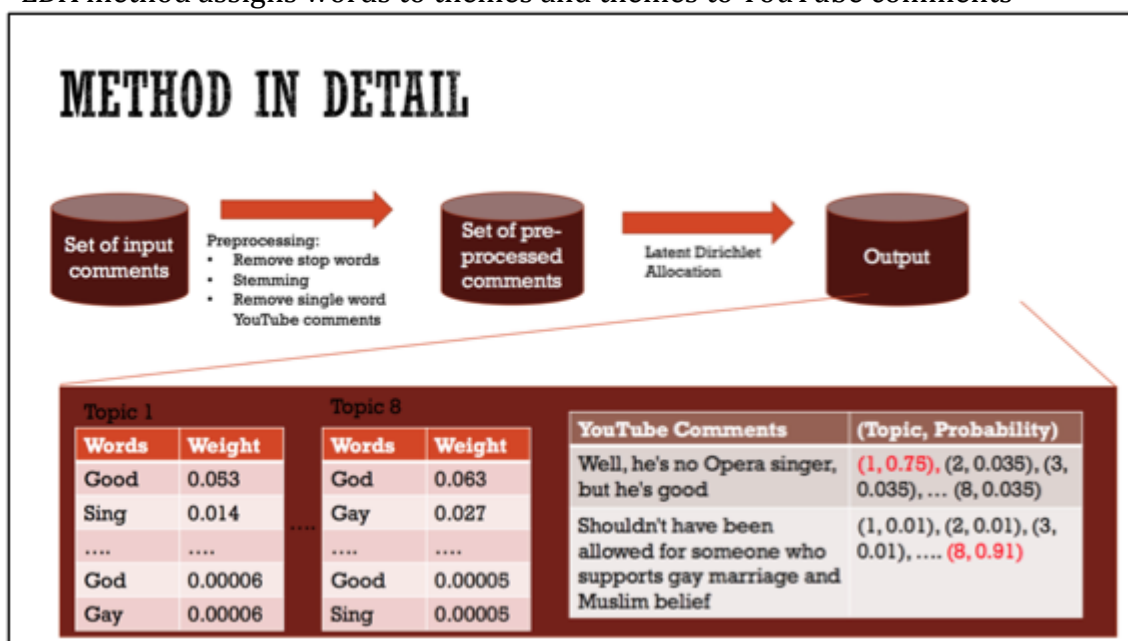


Figure 1: Diagram of research method in detail

First, comments were preprocessed by removing stop words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and articles. The words "Obama," "President," "Amazing," and "Grace" also were removed because they are the overarching themes in the comments, which could have led to LDA picking these terms instead of others that provide more insight. Each remaining word was lemmatized it (e.g. changing "running" to "run"). After that, single-word comments were removed, as many of them did not carry any meaning. After this preprocessing step, the remaining 1,493 comments were then submitted to LDA, which returned a list of topics. LDA was run to determine the best number of topics ranging from six to 10 themes. The number of common words were examined between topics, with higher numbers indicating similarity between topics and number of comments that share the same number of topics. A higher number indicates similarity. Researchers observed if there was significant change in these values when the number of topics were added. Finally, researched settled on using eight topics that related to similar themes found in the qualitative content analysis.

Computational techniques also were used to identify the tone of the comments. This technique allows the program to code each comment and output to determine whether the tone was positive, neutral, or negative. Researchers conducted intercoder reliability on a sample of 107, or approximately 10%, using Cronbach's alpha for an overall rating of 93%, exceeding the acceptable rating of 80%.; however, coding for tone using computational techniques was 58%, which was below the acceptable level. As a result, in the tone section, researchers reported only the results associated with the human coders.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question asked about themes that emerged in the YouTube comments regarding President Obama singing "Amazing Grace."

Findings placed the YouTube comments in one of these eight themes: 1) Obama can sing, 2) Why do people hate Obama?, 3) Was his heart really in it?, 4) Obama is a racist, 5) Obama is tricking people, 6) God bless America and Obama, 7) Obama is a hypocrite, and 8) other. Table 2 lists the themes and sample comments associated with prominent topics found in the YouTube comments. The first theme included comments that "President Obama can sing." Commenters were positive in their statements, often highlighting that the President is not only a good leader, but he also is a decent singer. Posts classified Obama as a saint and focused on how he "blessed" listeners by singing "Amazing Grace."

Conversely, topics of hate and the belief that "people hate Obama" emerged in the second theme. YouTube users posted comments about the video in reference to the hatred that has been expressed about the President throughout his two terms in office. Individuals used the platform to question why such feelings exist and to ask people to reconsider their misplaced anger. One person posted, "I don't get why some people hate Obama so much." Another person posted, "Hate and ignorance can blind some even when a MOVING, Real few moments occur....."

Other YouTube users questioned whether "President Obama's heart was actually in singing the song" in theme three. One person stated, "I have to give credit, I never thought he would sing this song. The question is, was his heart really in it? I hope so"; another person posted, "That's singing from the heart! Beautiful." The fourth theme emphasized the notion that Obama is a racist. Commenters used the YouTube video as a platform to post about Obama being an embarrassment to his race and him not extending the same courtesy to Whites who died. One person posted, "Ugh. Cooning right after 9 black people got shot." Other race-related posts focused on stereotypes of Black people in general. Themes included his true colors are

showing, they (Blacks) are always singing, look at the thug in the background with the sunglasses on, “sunglasses =/= thug” and “This is embarrassing to us young blacks.” Another person posted, “He never sang for white people who got shot by blacks...”

Table 2: Themes Found in YouTube Comments

Topic	YouTube Comments
Theme 1: Obama can sing	"Well, he's no Opera singer, but he's good." Obama isn't a good President but he's a great singer Must be some election in USA soon, when presidents sing, doing some good things.
Theme 2: Why do people hate Obama?	I don't get why some people hate Obama so much. Hate and ignorance can blind some even when a MOVING, Real few moments occur..... he is surrounded by people that hate this country, he just blocked a bill to block military pay, he hates
Theme 3: Was his heart really in it?	I have to give credit, I never thought he would sing this song. The question is, was his heart really in it? I hope so Beautiful sing & beautiful song That's singing from the heart! Beautiful
Theme 4: Obama is a racist	Ugh. Cooning right after 9 black people got shot. This is embarrassing to us young blacks. He never sang for white people who got shot by blacks..... anyone think racist obunga (sic) will ever sing at a white persons funeral that was murdered by blacks?
Theme 5: Obama is tricking people	You sheep gobble this shit up. Lol This country confuses the shit out of me.... such a wolf in sheep clothing!
Theme 6: God bless America and Obama	God bless America My god president for the rest of whole world may god bless him. A real leader! Respect! God bless you!
Theme 7: Obama is a hypocrite	How can he sing amazing grace when he was agree with gay marriage, shame on you. And you called your self Christian It makes me wanna be christian and black, am I alone? Shouldn't have been allowed for someone who supports gay marriage and muslim belief.
Theme 8: Other	

The fifth theme focused on the impression that President Obama is tricking people. “You sheep gobble this shit up. Lol.” and “such a wolf in sheep clothing!” Rounding out the categories were two themes that were dichotomous in nature. In the sixth theme that focused on blessing Obama and America after his rendition, comments included, “A real leader! Respect! God bless you!” The seventh theme included the suspicion that “Obama is a hypocrite.” This theme highlights the idea that “Muslims” are not supposed to sing “Amazing Grace.” Posts state, “Obama is not a Christian. This is all an act. look at the facts people! WAKE UP.” One person questioned, “how can he sing amazing grace when he was agree with gay marriage, shame on you. And you called yourself Christian.” Another person commented, “Shouldn't have been allowed for someone who supports gay marriage and muslim belief.” Finally, the eighth theme included foreign words and phrases.

LDA does not order the topics in terms of importance; therefore, the number of comments belonging to each topic were counted. The results are shown in Table 3. LDA calculates, for each comment, the probability that it belongs to each topic. Thus, researchers used two methods of looking at topic assignment. The first method assigned each comment to a single topic, corresponding to the topic with the highest probability as calculated (denoted as “top topic” in Table 3). The second method took into account that for some comments, there are a

few topics that have similar probabilities. Here we assign a topic to a comment as long as its probability is within $(1/(8*2)=0.0625)$ of the probability of the top topic. Also, after running LDA 39 comments that have equal probabilities assigned for each topic were found. These are short comments that typically contain only stop words; those comments were removed.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Themes

Theme	Frequency	% as top topic
1 Obama can sing	225	15.07
2 Why do people hate Obama?	148	9.91
3 Was his heart really in it?	207	13.86
4 Obama is a racist	197	13.19
5 Obama is tricking people	135	9.04
6 God bless America and Obama	259	17.35
7 Obama is a hypocrite	238	15.94
8 Other	84	5.62

Note. n=1,493

Tone Analysis

To answer the second research question, researchers analyzed the YouTube comments in terms of tone—positive, neutral, or negative—by first hand-tagging a subset of comments. After the filtering, a subsample of 107 comments was tagged. Researchers then looked at the tone of the tagged comments in each category. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Tone of YouTube Comments

Theme	Tone of YouTube Comments		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
1 Obama can sing	10	5	4
2 Why do people hate Obama?	6	1	4
3 Was his heart really in it?	10	5	2
4 Obama is a racist	4	3	8
5 Obama is tricking people	1	5	4
6 God bless America and Obama	11	3	4
7 Obama is a hypocrite	4	5	3
8 Other	3	2	0
Total	49	29	29

Most comments were positive with 49 YouTube comments falling into this category. The number of neutral and negative comments were equal with 29 of each falling into this category. According to the analysis, the God bless America and Obama theme had the most comments that fell into the positive tone category (11), followed by Obama can sing and questions of whether his heart was in singing "Amazing Grace" (10 respectively). Comments reflecting the thought that Obama is tricking people was the least likely to have a positive connotation (1). Concerning positive tone, the Obama is a racist theme was the most likely to be tagged as having a negative tone (8). Several of the themes tied with four falling in the negative category—God bless America and Obama, Obama can sing, why do people hate Obama, and Obama is tricking people. Most of the themes were similar in the occurrence of neutral comments with Obama can sing, questions of whether his heart was in it, Obama is a hypocrite, and Obama is tricking people fell in this category.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

This study extends the current literature by providing an analysis of the tone and themes used to characterize President Obama's rendition of "Amazing Grace" in 2015. Such analyses are imperative because popular culture is a major source of ideas that can shape people's perceptions of themselves and others. This study helps nail down the nuances of comments citizens posted to YouTube. As mass media continue to transform, the need to study group interactions in new media environments increases in importance. Platforms such as YouTube give individual users the chance to have their voices heard about topics that they may feel strongly about. YouTube comments are of interest because social media was heavily used in the framing of the eulogy in general. This study offers an opportunity to look at the representations of race as they emerged in the comments in the sample.

This study suggests some frames were dichotomous. For instance, the themes that framed President Obama as a good singer or as a hypocrite were opposite sentiments. While some citizens focused on his "inability to sing," and framed him as tricking people, others were passionate about depicting him in a positive manner, often emphasizing the impact of the event, as well as the awesomeness of his singing and presidency in general. Many YouTube comments provided a platform for individuals to share their views on a racially charged case as discussed in the review of the literature. Users posted comments about Obama being a racist and an embarrassment to his race and him not extending the same courtesy to Whites who died. Other race-related posts focused on stereotypes of black people, in general. This finding demonstrates that traditional narratives of African-Americans emerged that align with the cultural narratives discussed in the literature review. Historical stereotypes of race and gender continue in new media environments. A counter-narrative emerged that framed the President more positively. Some comments asked God to "bless" Obama, or focused on how he "blessed" listeners by singing "Amazing Grace."

YouTube comments were strategic in creating, sharing, and spreading messages to address racial stereotyping of the president. This study is important as it indicates individuals had a dichotomous range of views on the president's eulogy. YouTube provided a platform for both supporters and detractors to share messages. The sharing of such messages can be viewed as challenging the status quo regarding the representation of the voices of Black people that are often lost in mainstream media messages.

As with any other study, there were limitations with this analysis. By focusing on one social media platform, the findings cannot be generalized to other social media platforms. Worth noting is YouTube was chosen for its reputation as a medium for leading the way in online news. Another limitation was the challenge of using LDA to determine the number of themes. Having too few topics means that various topics are grouped together and having too many may lead to some topics being fragmented.

This study examined an approximately five-month timeframe of YouTube comments that began with Obama delivering the eulogy in late June 2015 and culminated with a clip of the President singing an excerpt of "Amazing Grace" on an album released in early December 2015. Future studies might use a longitudinal approach, and determine if online public opinion changes greatly over time. Also of interest would be survey or focus group approaches that examine uses and gratifications of individuals posted comments used in this study. The computational methods had a few limitations. Computational techniques rely on certain assumptions about the data to work. For computational methods, there is a lack of comparison

of data with real-life applications, as gathering data and the right human expertise to judge the results can be expensive. They enable a larger number of analyses to be performed and allow data to be looked at various ways. However, these methods are not perfect. One limitation is the challenge of using the LDA to determine the number of themes. Having too few topics means that various topics are grouped together and having too many may lead to fragmentation. In this study, a researcher ran LDA, ranging from six to 10 topics, to determine the best number of themes.

Secondly, LDA does not distinguish between the various meanings of a word, treating them as the same. LDA takes single words as a unit of study, where potential phrases that have specific meaning are broken up, and they can provide other insights. Finally, in this study, researchers attempted to remove duplicate YouTube comments. However, there are still some "near-duplicates" comments that differ by one to two words, or may be a different hashtag. In the future, researchers will explore more advanced near-duplicate removal techniques to assess whether they influence the results.

Findings are important as perceptions and stereotypes often become the dominant viewpoint. Scholars must continue to explore social media and the dynamics of race. Such analyses may provide valuable insight into the changing fabric of popular culture and the intricacies of race-related topics and the evolution of social media platforms. "The Internet is a cultural bazaar," says free-speech expert Adam Thierer. "It's the place to find the best and worst of all human elements on display" (Howard, 2009). In the end, positive speech is the best way to drown out hate speech in a "postracial" society.

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